



**CITY OF BURLINGTON  
BOARD OF HEALTH**  
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## BOARD OF HEALTH

Caroline Tassey, APRN Interim Chair; Mary D. Hart, RN; Julie Hathaway, MD, PhD; Celia Bird, APRN, Ian McHale, MPH;

## HEALTH OFFICER

William Ward, Director of Permitting & Inspections

### **DRAFT MINUTES FOR SPECIAL MEETING OF BURLINGTON BOARD OF HEALTH Zoom Conference Thursday, October 15, 2020 at 6:30 PM**

**Attending:** *Caroline Tassey, William Ward, Mary Hart, Ian McHale, Celeste Crowley*

**Absent:** *Julie Hathaway, Celia Bird*

Meeting called to order by Interim Chair Tassey at 6:30 PM

AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION	ACTION TAKEN
1. Approvals: a. Agenda Open Fire Pit Resolution	a. No changes to the agenda .	Meeting was called to order at 6:33pm.
2. Public Forum	<p>There were a number of people who joined the meeting to either listen to the Open Fire discussion or to speak in favor or against the proposed open fire.</p> <p>Martha; she wanted to voice that she is opposed to the open fire proposal. She also asked if the Fire Chief finds a fire with no permit, does he make them put it out. (BOH discussed and confirmed that yes the Fire Chief does require them to put out the fire) She is adamant that the property owner apply for fire permits and NOT tenants.</p> <p>Adam; he is in favor if the permitting process is done diligently. Winter will bring new challenges due to COVID and</p>	

	<p>feels fires will happen regardless of permits. He stressed that a well documented and regulated system be in put place.</p> <p>Kitty; is in favor of the open fires. But also said it needs to be legislated and controlled to be safe outside during the winter months.</p> <p>Joan; is in favor. She was the councilor who actually proposed winter fires but did so with smokeless fire pits. She was persuaded to broaden the scope of the proposal to include open/wood burning fire pits. She feels that woodstove &amp; fireplaces are still not illegal so outdoor pits would not be any different for health, and that emotional health is more important.</p> <p>Kate; is in favor of the proposal. Citing mental health, a way to socialize safely, and the city air quality is better than normal due to reduced tourists. She supports smokeless fire pits and a well regulated process.</p> <p>Al; wanted to be sure that the Board of Health understood that advocating for your health is difficult. And asked that the BOH make it very clear with real information what the difference in health hazards exist between a wood stove vs wood fire pit, in regards to particulates being released. Will permits allow all day burning or is it for a designated time, ie couple of hours? And could the BOH provide specific information between 1 fire pit vs 12 fire pits burning in a neighborhood/block. If the proposal passes will the Chief be in charge of air quality affected with the number of</p>	
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	<p>permits issued? What is the true trade off between mental and physical health?</p> <p>Aly; He initially liked the proposal but after hearing from so many constituents he feels we have to be very careful to evaluate the decision thoroughly. He was concerned about the potential for abusing pen fires, and the health benefits vs risks. He suggested a trial run for a few months in the South End for this winter. (The Board members reiterated that the proposal is only for this winter 2020-2021 and a trial wouldn't be feasible). He also asked who would be responsible for applying for permits landlord or tenants? And what if six units each wanted a permit at the same time? He did point out that gas pits are already an approved item so why would we want wood burning pits if there are already approved alternatives?</p> <p>Karen; was originally in favor but as she heard from an overwhelming number of people who are concerned about health risks and which neighborhoods can or can't make use of the proposal, she is not convinced it will be a benefit for everyone. She came to listen to the discussion not to influence the BOH in their decision. She did discuss that she was not in favor of a trial period. And lastly she pointed out that violations are occurring now and having a permitting system for the winter isn't going to change or lessen the violations.</p> <p>John; Emotional well being is a health matter to alleviate depression.</p>	
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	<p>William; is in support of the fire pits as it is beneficial to mental health and social distancing.</p> <p>Public forum concluded at 7:23pm.</p>	
<p>3. Board of Health Discussion:</p> <p>City Council Referral on Resolution to allow permits for safe operation of contained fires during Covid-19 winter.</p>	<p>The Board of Health does not support the Open Fire Proposal due to physical health risks.</p> <p>The letter of recommendation from the Board of Health to the City Council was read aloud for all participants.</p> <p>The BOH added smokeless fire pits as an alternative. Even though they burn wood it is a closed system that burns at a higher temperature which significantly reduces particulates that are released into the air.</p> <p>Board of Health member, Ian, mentioned that other cities do have the same or similar ordinances. He also discussed that there are no bans on home heaters, and that grills are considered “required for life” but outdoor pits are not required for life/survival.</p> <p>Board of Health member, Caroline, also discussed the mental health vs physical health benefits. Citing that due to the parameters of the current ordinance, the majority of residents would not be able to take advantage of the open fire proposal therefore only a small percentage would see a mental health benefit.</p> <p>Ian also discussed alternatives to wood fire pits as well as citing the other social alternatives that the City is providing through the Parks &amp; Recreation Department.</p>	

	<p>There were minor grammatical errors that were corrected.</p> <p>There was a motion to approve the Board of Health's draft resolution to the City Council that is not in support of the Open Fire Pit Resolution.</p>	<p>. Moted by Mary, Ian 2<sup>nd</sup>.</p>
4. Next Meeting	Thursday, November, at 6:30pm	Meet via Zoom
5. Adjournment	Meeting was adjourned at 8:23pm	Mary motined, Ian 2 <sup>nd</sup> .